

TAYLOR (H. G.)

Retrospection
OF THE
Medical Society of New Jersey,
WITH
Some Suggestions as to its Improvement.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS
BEFORE THE
MEDICAL SOCIETY OF NEW JERSEY,

AT ASBURY PARK, JUNE 18th-19th, 1889.

BY
H. GENET TAYLOR, A. M., M. D.,
CAMDEN, N. J.

Extracted from the Transactions of the Medical Society of New Jersey.

L. J. HARDHAM, PRINTER, NEWARK, N. J.

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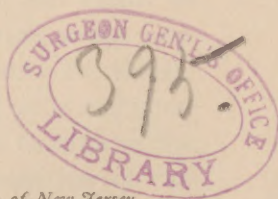


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RETROSPECTION OF THE MEDICAL SOCIETY OF NEW JERSEY,

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Another year with its pleasures and sorrows has passed into history, and as this Society assembles to-day, on its one hundred and twenty-third anniversary, our thoughts naturally dwell upon "the years that have gone before," and it is therefore eminently proper that we should pause for a moment and inquire whether in the discharge of our duties, we have regarded the obligations imposed upon us more than a century ago, by those who organized this Society, the object of which was "to enlarge the stock of knowledge and experience in the science of medicine," as well as to direct our attention to the best mode and manner as to our duties regarding the future. It is for this purpose I propose inviting your attention this evening, to a subject not entirely new to some of the older members, and which is, "A retrospection of the Medical Society of New Jersey."

As the New Jersey Medical Society is the oldest medical society in this country, it should be the first to take action toward the advancement of the medical profession, and if any crude suggestions from me can further that object, I shall feel my duty has been, in a measure, discharged.

It is a well-known truism that "in unity there is strength," and that a concerted action by any organization as a body, has more power and effect than the best counsel or advice from the wisest individual, for "counsel or advice can always be received or rejected as our reason prompts us," but resolutions or edicts published and proclaimed by an organized body, are clothed with a force and authority which cannot emanate from a single individual. It must therefore be manifest, that any action taken by this Society as a body, transmitted as it is through the medium of our published proceedings, to the other state societies, as well as the American Medical Association, will be looked upon with more favor than suggestions from an individual member.

As many years have elapsed since any particular reference has been made from this chair, to the original organization of the New Jersey Medical Society, I trust you will pardon me for referring briefly to the objects for which it was established. These are contained in a most interesting and valuable instrument, dated July 23d, 1766, and attested by the signatures of sixteen medical gentlemen, who were present in the City of New Brunswick on that day, and who were assembled for the purpose of taking action toward effecting a permanent organization, and to which meeting every member of the profession, in the then "Province of New Jersey," was invited. This document is known as the original constitution of the Society, and contains fourteen independent sections or regulations.

The preamble sets out the importance of a thorough organization, as tending "to enlarge the stock of knowledge and experience in the pursuit of the science of medicine," and suggests "if a well-regulated society could be organized it would tend to the improvement of

all, and each member, as well as the public, would be benefited thereby." It also advocates the protection of the members by regulating or restricting the admission of applicants, and with these objects in view, and moved by the sentiments set out in this preamble, it was mutually agreed to form "an amicable and brotherly society, to be called and known by the name of The New Jersey State Medical Society" (this name was afterwards changed to the Medical Society of New Jersey), and by this same instrument those present adopted the articles attached to, and making part of said preamble in the following words: "We do hereby engage each for himself to the whole and to one another, as far as possible, inevitably to observe and fully submit to, as obligatory upon us."

By these articles the members bound themselves:

FIRST.—Not to enter any house in their professional capacity, or undertake any case but with the purest intention of giving the utmost relief and assistance that the art of medicine or surgery would enable them.

SECOND.—To at all times, when desired, consult with any of the brethren, and in all cases of doubt to recommend a consultation.

THIRD.—Not to keep secret any nostrum or specific medicine of any kind, and in all consultations openly, freely and candidly give to each other their sincere opinion of the case, and the means they thought most likely to effect a cure.

FOURTH.—That they would on all occasions treat each other as becomes the medical character, and at all times support the institution and advance the dignity of medicine.

FIFTH.—That they would assist gratis by all means in their power the distressed, poor and indigent who may

have no legal maintenance and support in their respective counties, but if legal provision has been made, that a reasonable reward from the particular township or county should be exacted.

SIXTH.—That they would hold meetings twice in each year, under a penalty of three pounds for non-attendance, except in cases of sickness or reasonable impediment, to be judged of by the Society.

SEVENTH.—That they would form sub-societies or associations to meet at least once in every two months in different localities, for the purpose of conversing and discussing medical subjects. That these subordinate societies should keep regular minutes, which should be laid before the general Society at its meetings, with power in the sub-societies to make by-laws not repugnant to the general laws and fundamental principles of the general Society.

EIGHTH.—That at the half yearly meeting, such further regulations should be made as might from time to time be judged expedient and necessary for promoting the good purposes of the Society.

The Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh Sections provide for the election of officers, and their respective duties.

The Twelfth Section provides for extraordinary meetings.

The THIRTEENTH.—Provides the mode of becoming a member, and for his election by ballot, by squares and triangles, requiring a three-quarter vote to elect.

The FOURTEENTH.—Provides "for the dissolution of the Society," which action required a vote of seven-eighths of (not the members present but) the whole membership.

LASTLY.—That the Society would do all in its power to discourage and discountenance all quacks, mounte-

banks, imposters or other ignorant pretenders to medicine, and would on no account support or patronize any but those who had been regularly initiated into medicine, either at some University, or under the direction of some able Master or Masters, or who by the study of the theory, and of the practice of the art, had otherwise qualified themselves to the satisfaction of the Society for the exercise of the profession.

This "declaration of principles," which was the foundation or corner-stone upon which this Society was erected, is dated and attested July 27, 1766, and signed by the sixteen medical gentlemen hereinbefore referred to, and is more particularly and at large set out in that valuable work, "History of Medicine," by Dr. Stephen Wickes, to whom this Society and the profession at large is indebted, and who, for five long years, labored most diligently in collecting by piecemeal, and from old manuscripts, records, and other sources, the information contained in his book. But although this document bears the impress of age, and is the first evidence we have of any regular organization of a medical society in this country, yet the subject of "Medical Legislation" antedates it nearly a century.

MEDICAL LEGISLATION IN NEW JERSEY.

The licensing of physicians to practice medicine was a prerogative belonging to the English Crown. Charles II., King of England, in the year 1664, granted to his brother James, Duke of York, a charter for possessions in North America, covering the territory now the State of New Jersey. In the same year, the Duke of York grants this latter territory to Sir George Carteret, and to John, Lord Berkeley, with all the prerogatives of government that he

had acquired. Part of these privileges were afterward conceded to the people, in a document called "Grants and Concessions," but the authority to licence practitioners of medicine was not included in them. Therefore, this right was reserved by the proprietors, and exercised by the Governors, who were their representatives. The first recorded instance of the use of this authority was in 1706, in which year acting-Governor Richard Ingolsby issued two licenses.

On May 24, 1706, is recorded the following: "To Nathaniel Wade, Gentleman,—Being well informed of your knowledge, skill and judgment in the practice of chirurgery and phesig,—I do hereby license and authorize you, to practice the said sciences of chirurgery and phesig within this, Her Majesty's province of New Jersey, for and during pleasure."

Dr. Wade had practiced medicine at Southampton, Long Island, before removing to New Jersey, in which colony physicians were licensed by the towns.*

This shows that it was necessary then for a physician to secure a license in New Jersey, even when a lawful practitioner in an adjacent colony, a legal qualification, that is required at the present time by our State under the law of 1880.

* "At a General Court of Assizes held at Huntington, Long Island, in October, 1677. Upon intimation of divers considerable cures in chirurgery done on several persons by Mr. Jonas Wood, of Huntington, and the great good he is capable of doing in that art, but that he is not willing publicly to practice without some particular license or allowance from authority as law directs,—there likewise being no other chirurgeon in these parts, the Court having received full satisfaction of the abilities of ye said Mr. Wood in that faculty, they do allow of his practice in chirurgery, of which all persons may take notice accordingly. By order of the General Court af Assizes." (New York Colonial Records, vol. 14, page 730.)

This procedure continued in New Jersey until 1772, when a new law was passed. In the meantime, in 1766, the New Jersey State Medical Society was organized, as before stated, as a voluntary organization, and acquired sufficient influence to secure the passage of a law (in 1772) which required of physicians intending to practice in this State, that they must pass an examination before two Justices of the Supreme Court; they, calling to their assistance, one or more persons to assist them.

Naturally the judges would call upon members of the Society, which virtually threw the power of licensure into its hands. This law was limited to five years, and expired in 1777, during the excitement of the Revolutionary War. After the close of the war the same law was re-enacted in 1784, without any limit as to time, and continued in force until 1816.

In the year 1790 the New Jersey State Medical Society obtained a charter, which permitted it to organize and hold property, but gave it no other authority. It is interesting to note that this was one of the first important charters granted by either the colony, or the State of New Jersey. Prior to this very few had been issued, and these were mostly for meadow bank companies, to enable the farmers to protect the meadows from the encroachments of the tides. By the year 1816 new companies began to organize for manufacturing and transportation purposes, constantly seeking for new powers and privileges.

In that year the State Medical Society secured another charter, that gave them exclusive control of the power to grant licenses to practice medicine in this State. Under heavy penalties or fine and imprisonment no one was allowed to practice unless he had procured a diploma from the Society, after passing an examination before its

Board of Censors. This charter was renewed in 1830. During this period laws of a similar nature had been enacted by the Legislatures of a number of the older States of the Union, so that the only method of legally entering the profession was through the medical societies. It is conceded by some of the most eminent writers* upon this subject, that this restrictive legislation had a beneficial effect upon the practitioners of the first half of this century, elevating them in the estimation of the people, and raising the standard of professional requirements.

In the meantime, medical schools began to increase and to send forth a large number of alumni. These deeming it unnecessary to pass a second examination after having been sanctioned by their "Alma Mater," had sufficient influence to have a law passed in New Jersey in 1851, which exempted from examination by the State Medical Society the graduates of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and the Medical Department of the University of New York, the Medical Department of the University of Pennsylvania, the Jefferson Medical College, and the Pennsylvania College of Philadelphia.

Two new sects in medicine had been gradually rising into prominence. These were the Thomsonians, or Eclectics, and the Homœopaths, and were effectually barred out from legal recognition by the power vested in our own State Society. Yet their practitioners were increasing in number and securing a growing clientage, who looked upon them as martyrs whenever any attempt was made to enforce legislation against them.

These, in the year 1854, secured the passage of a law

* Address of Dr. N. S. Davis before American Association of Medical Editors at Cleveland, 1883.

whereby "All persons of good moral character, with diplomas from any medical college that required graduates to be twenty-one years old, studied medicine three years with a physician, and taught two courses of lectures of twelve weeks each," had authority to practice medicine, after depositing an English copy of their diplomas in the Clerk's office of the county where residing.

This practically nullified the charter of the State Medical Society, so that eleven years afterwards, in 1866, when the present charter was obtained, the Society deemed it wisest to relinquish all special privileges, merely reserving the right to grant a diploma, after examination, to any one who might seek to enter the profession in that way. The effect of this has been salutary, the profession in our State has made great progress, has increased its knowledge of medicine and science immensely, and now holds a more commanding influence over public opinion than during any previous period.

The last legislative enactment passed in this State was approved in 1880. This law and its subsequent amendments, required as a qualification of a physician, that he shall have a diploma from a legally-chartered medical college, or one from a medical society that has lawful authority to grant one. It provides a fine of twenty-five dollars and a penalty of six months' imprisonment, for any person convicted of violating it. It defines a Homœopath to be a graduate of a Homœopathic College, or one who has a diploma from a Homœopathic Medical Society having power to issue it. This places them upon the same footing as ourselves.

All diplomas must be recorded in the Clerk's office of the county where the physician intends to practice. In fact, the state has resumed control over the practice of medicine, just as it did in its early colonial days.

A review of the history of medicine in New Jersey shows that from its infancy quacks abounded and flourished, and at times almost excluded educated physicians from its territory. Charles Gordon,* of Woodbridge, N. J., writing to his brother, Dr. John Gordon, in 1685, advises him not to come here as a doctor, but rather as a planter or merchant, because "there are few diseases but ague and cut fingers, and empiricks abound."

Obstetrics was for a long time in the hands of the midwives, and much of the local practice was controlled by old women. There seems to have been a gradual change for the better, as practitioners became better educated, continuing up to the present time, aided in part by legislation, but largely due to the efforts and influence of the state and county medical associations.

The present law, enacted in 1880, seems to have worked very efficiently, as under its operation the Black Doctor, the Cancer Doctor and the great Indian Doctor have disappeared. Even the sale of patent medicines has diminished within the last few years, not because of legal enactments, but under the operation of the laws of trade. The reduction of the price of these medicines by the class of dealers styled "cutters" has caused the druggists to largely discontinue their sale, because they are not now profitable. Commercial travellers state that there has been a large falling off in the sale of these articles throughout the United States.

Within the last decade a number of states, more particularly those of the West and South, have established boards of examiners, before which all physicians intending to practice within the state must appear, pass an examination, and obtain a license. The mode of ap-

* Wickes' History of Medicine in New Jersey.

pointing these boards varies. In most of the states in which this plan has been adopted, they are appointed by the Governor. In some, as in Virginia, the medical societies name a list of candidates from which the Governor must make his selection. In Arkansas, each county may have a medical board, which is appointed by the Justices of the Peace. Minnesota has a mixed board, composed of nine members, two of whom must be Homœopaths. California is the most liberal of all, having provided three separate medical boards of examiners, styled Eclectic, Homœopathic and Regular.

From what has been previously stated, it will be perceived that these states are only adopting, in a modified form, the restrictive methods of this and other old states in vogue in the early part of the present century. In the former, the new legislation confers upon the governor the power to appoint boards of medical examiners. In the latter, the legislature, by means of a charter, placed the same authority in the medical societies.

"History repeats itself." The new states of the West, and likewise the newly constructed ones of the South, are in some respects in the same condition as were the old Eastern and Middle states in former times, and are overrun by an army of quacks and charlatans, who having eaten up the pastures of the East, have hied to the new green fields of the West, and therefore these communities are applying, in a new style, the same remedies that were formerly used here.

At the present time the only quackery to legislate against in our state is Homœopathy. What chance is there against this powerful organization? It can never unite with the regular profession in any plan of state examination, unless the questions propounded be of the simplest character, or the rating of the answers to them

be the veriest farce. Its foundation is the law "*similia similibus curantur*," whereby diseases are treated for symptoms, remedies that produce certain symptoms in healthy persons are employed to cure affections exhibiting the same indications. Vegetable substances are preferred, and the whole of the plant must be used; therefore the chemical or physical properties of them need not be learned. In accordance with this doctrine the study of anatomy and physiology is likewise unnecessary, and the leaders in that profession have from time to time acknowledged this fact,* stating that they were useful, however, as a means of general culture.

To agree to the establishment of a mixed Board of Examiners, who would faithfully perform their duties, would be the destruction of Homœopathy. Whatever some of the brethern of that faith may have done in the West, it will be noticed that in Philadelphia, which is the centre of the organization, the Homœopathic Medical Society recently passed a resolution opposing the appointment of a mixed Board of Examiners, and favoring a separate one for themselves. Subsequently, however, they agreed to accept a Board on which they had equal representation.

The only use in our profession for a Board of Examiners is, therefore, to see if the graduates of our own schools have a sufficient education to practice here. This brings us in antagonism with every chartered college in the country.

Twenty years ago these institutions multiplied rapidly, and some of them had a very indifferent curriculum, but under the general tendencies of the times to concentra-

* Article, "Homœopathic Remedies," Transactions of New Jersey State Medical Society for 1884, page 199.

tion, their growth is now stopped, and soon the smaller ones will be crushed out by their powerful rivals.

My own idea is that an improvement in medical education and attainments, and a weeding-out of incompetent physicians can be best attained in our own state, by the appointing in every County Society, and in our State Society, of a permanent committee to watch for every illegal practitioner locating in their jurisdiction; to examine the diplomas registered in the clerk's office, and if any were issued by doubtful colleges; to make inquiry about their standing, and to make a report to this Society at least once a year. I do not think that any prosecutions (which are undesirable) would then be necessary. The very fact that such a watch had been instituted in every county would deter illegal or incompetent physicians from attempting to practice in this state.

In concluding the Retrospection of this Society, and that of Medical Legislation (which is a part of its history), I would ask your attention for a brief period to some thoughts and suggestions which have occurred to me, for the advancement or improvement of our state organization.

INTRODUCTION OF "SECTIONS" IN THE ORDER OF BUSINESS.

The meetings of this Society, like most of the State Medical Societies, are held annually, and the members are brought together for mutual interchange of views on medical subjects, as well as the transaction of the prescribed order of business of the session.

During the twelve months that have elapsed previous to such meetings many changes take place in medical

science, and every member is more or less interested in such changes being duly and properly reported. This can only be done in a systematic order and by a proper regulation of the various subjects to be presented. This plan is to incorporate into the order of business a list of the principal medical subjects, dividing the same under proper heads called "Sections." The consideration of these Sections would then be one of the prominent features of the session, and bring us in direct contact with the latest advancement in medicine, surgery, obstetrics, gynecology and other important specialties which are now receiving marked investigation by the enlightened men of the present day.

Should the Society adopt this plan for the reading of papers and the discussion of medical subjects by sections, I would urge that our sessions be prolonged and that the same be made a special order of business.

JOURNALIZING THE TRANSACTIONS.

In reading the Transactions of this Society year after year, I notice with regret, that but few original papers containing investigations into the many medical or scientific subjects of the day, are published, and with the exception of the duly-appointed essays, or papers, required to be read, and the annual report of the Standing Committee, the interest in the same is almost lost, or narrowed down to that of a reference book, to be used in the future, if needed. It is not for the want of material, or the valuable experience of the members, that we have so little interesting reports on these subjects, but I believe this in a great measure is due to the fact that, as our Transactions are published but once a year, they offer

but little incentive for the members to engage in such work.

The American Medical Association for years, published its Transactions in the same manner as this Society, as an annual report, but, as the members are aware, a radical change in the publication was proposed at the meeting of the Association, held in New York in 1880, and, on the report of a special committee, these Transactions were ordered to be journalized, and are now issued in a weekly form, so that to-day the members of the Association are placed in direct possession of valuable papers on almost every medical and scientific subject, from every State in the Union, and more important is the fact that, coming in a pamphlet form, and issued weekly, they are read as fresh intelligence of medical import by, I may say, hundreds of our medical brethren, whereas, under the old system, but few would be the wiser of the contents of the annual publication.

The American Medical Journal depends in a great measure upon the State Medical Societies for material and support, and I do not see why this Society should not be benefited by its own medical talent, and be the first State organization to adopt this change in the publication of its proceedings. This departure from the old system of publication would place in the possession of every member, information that would necessarily result in much good to the profession throughout the State, and, I am firmly convinced, would outweigh any objection that can be urged on account of the additional expense that might be incurred, which I feel is entirely a secondary consideration, from the fact that a journal of this character would doubtless receive a recognition from every member of the medical profession in the State that would cause it to be self-sustaining from its inception.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A MEDICAL LIBRARY.

Another subject I desire to submit for consideration, and would strongly advocate, is the establishing of a State Medical Library, as a permanent place of depository for the collection of books and valuable medical works. The many contributions of books, papers, and the Transactions from other State Medical Societies (that, in the accumulation of years must have taken place, and overburdened our Corresponding Secretary) should be safely and carefully deposited for reference, and it would be a small expense or outlay to procure suitable quarters for such a purpose, and which, in time, by a proper care exercised by those appointed to have charge of the same, we could establish a Medical Library that would be of incalculable benefit to us all, and a credit to this Society, and to which, doubtless, many valuable and rare works would be added by the profession. This library should be established at the Capital of the State, and placed under the supervision of the Corresponding Secretary.

I cannot close this address without referring to the death of one of the oldest Fellows, and one of the prominent members of this Society, which took place September 14, 1888, and who, in 1862, occupied the same honorable position which, by your suffrage, I was elected one year ago. I refer to Dr. John Woolverton, who, for forty years, practiced his profession in the City of Trenton, during which time he filled many offices of trust and honor, not only as a medical man, but in civil life. I will also add, that his address as President, delivered on June 27, 1863, "On the Duties and Privileges of the Medical Profession," was one full of sound doctrine and good advice, and will long remain in the memory of those

who were present at that meeting. Quoting from the Rev. Dr. Salisbury, who delivered the sermon at his funeral, "He was a man among men, kind and helpful and honest in all his dealings, and yet so humble and modest, that he was regarded as a model of perfection. He was proof against bribery and corruption, and was ever faithful to the trusts committed to his care."

